

April 28, 2014

The Hon. Ron Barber
Attn: Lauren Alfred
1029 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Rep. Barber:

On behalf of our 26,000 members and the 60,000 licensed Marriage and Family Therapists we represent, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy is pleased to endorse your forthcoming bill, the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act.

We are particularly pleased that this bill would add Marriage and Family Therapists as Medicare Part B-eligible practitioners. Medicare beneficiaries have the highest incidence of clinical depression of any age group, and many have other mental-health issues. Yet many beneficiaries, especially those in rural locales, are unable to access mental-health providers, a situation made worse with the large Baby Boom generation starting to retire. Marriage and Family Therapists, who are licensed in every state and the District of Columbia to provide a full range of mental-health treatments, and who often practice in rural locales, are part of the solution to this important and growing problem.

We also are pleased that the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act would make other improvements in federal mental-health programs, such as the Medicare and Medicaid programs, and would require mental-health screenings for military recruits.

Thank you for work on this important bill, and please inform our Government Affairs Manager Brian Rasmussen how we may assist you.

Sincerely,



Tracy Todd, PhD, MFT
Executive Director